

FINAL SPORTS



Gary Payton: Has strong debut for Lakers.



New-look Lakers win

L.A. handles Mavs; Spurs collect rings, edge Suns ■ 1, 8C



‘Stan’ is a reborn ‘Newhart’

Norm Macdonald shines in Fox sitcom that mixes rural and urban wit  
★★★★½ review, 1D



By Art Streiber, Fox

Wednesday, October 29, 2003

Newsline

■ News ■ Money ■ Sports ■ Life

Fed keeps rates unchanged

Economy is improving, but policymakers want to keep interest rates low ■ 1, 5B

Index	Close	Change
Dow Jones industrial average	9748.31	▲ 140.15
Nasdaq composite	1932.26	▲ 49.35
T-bond, 30-year yield	5.09%	▼ 0.05
USA TODAY Internet 50	109.12	▲ 3.42

Sources: USA TODAY research, MarketWatch.com



U.S. indicates shift toward Iran

Regime change there isn't a goal, State Department's Richard Armitage says in toned-down rhetoric, 15A



By Joe Skipper, Reuters

Columbia: Landing safely in Florida in May 1998.

Shuttle cabin design faulted

Columbia crew might have survived if pod had been more heat-resistant; new report could shape future design ■ 2A



Democratic race or bust

Excerpts of Walter Shapiro's new book on some of the surprising twists in the early campaigning ■ 10A

Senate confirms Leavitt to lead EPA

Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt replaces Christie Whitman, who stepped down in May, as head of the Environmental Protection Agency; Leavitt aims to tap technology to protect the environment. 9A.

Money: Putnam charged with fraud

Move against Putnam Investments and two former portfolio managers is first formal action against a major mutual fund company in trading probe. 1B.

► Columnist Kevin Maney doesn't get interview with Linux creator, ends up sweating it. 3B.

Sports: Athletes fly in style

Chartered flights save time but not money; pro athletes say it's worth it. Cover story. 1C.

► Bob Knight challenges NCAA on ethics. 1C.

Life: Even U.S. tots 'immersed in media'

Study also finds that children 6 and under spend as much time with TV and video games as they do playing outside. Child's reading skills may suffer. 5D.

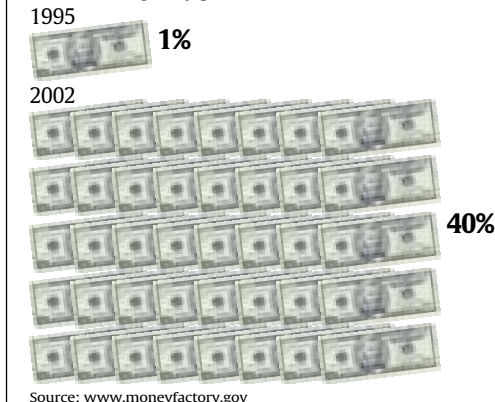
By John O. Buckley

Get breaking news updated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at [www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com)

USA TODAY Snapshots

Modern counterfeiting

Percentage of counterfeit notes detected in the USA that were digitally produced:



Source: [www.moneyfactory.gov](http://www.moneyfactory.gov)

By Shannon Reilly and Robert W. Ahrens, USA TODAY

Crossword	9D
Editorial/Opinion	19, 21A
Lotteries	9C
Marketplace Today	9D
State-by-state	17A
Stocks	5, 7-11B

©COPYRIGHT 2003 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co., Inc.  
Subscriptions, customer service 1-800-USA-0001  
[www.mysusatoday.com](http://www.mysusatoday.com)

L.A. homes spared as winds steer flames

Thousands of firefighters wage seesaw battle in Southern California; Gov. Gray Davis says deadliest wildfires in a decade likely will be costliest disaster the state has faced ■ 3, 12A



By Richard Hartog, Los Angeles Times, via AP

Lake Arrowhead, Calif.: A firefighter turns away from the heat of an oncoming firestorm approaching the 18 Highway.

Bush: 'We're not leaving'

Cites shift in defense tactics; support for Iraq policy slips



By Greg Baker, AP

Suicide bomb target: Iraqis walk past burned-out cars Tuesday near the al-Khudra police station in Baghdad.

By Judy Keen  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — President Bush said Tuesday that "we're not leaving" Iraq despite continuing violence there and concerns at home about U.S. casualties and the growing cost of restoring order.

"This country will stay the course. We'll do our job," the president said at a news conference in the White House Rose Garden.

He blamed loyalists to ousted Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and foreign terrorists for a rash of attacks. Bush said the United States is responding by:

► Adding checkpoints and making potential targets more secure.

► Giving Iraqis a larger role in intelligence-gathering to help thwart terrorist attacks.

► Training Iraqi border-patrol agents to prevent terrorists from entering through Iran and Syria.

"We're constantly looking at the enemy and adjusting," Bush said.

More than three dozen people, including a U.S. soldier, have been killed over the past few days in a wave of suicide bombings.

The president said he has leveled with the American people about problems there. "I can't put it any more plainly: Iraq is a dangerous place. That's leveling."

Bush's defense of his handling of Iraq came as a USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll shows support for his policies has slipped. Democrats running for president have made the issue a centerpiece of their campaigns. Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry criticized Bush for saying the Navy posted the "Mission accomplished" banner behind Bush on the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1 when he said major combat operations had ended. Kerry said Bush "refuses to take responsibility not just for his taxpayer-funded landing on an aircraft carrier but for the betrayal of our troops that his lack of post-war planning represented."

The president said he will tell voters next year "that the world is more peaceful and more free under my leadership, and America is more secure."

Bush said repeatedly that Iraq is a "dangerous" place. He did not say, as he did Monday, that attacks are an encouraging sign because, "The more progress we make ... the more desperate these killers become."

He offered no new rationale for the U.S. commitment. Asked whether he could promise that there will be fewer troops in Iraq a year from now, he called it "a trick question" and declined to answer.

In the 48-minute news conference, his first since July 31, Bush said he is cooperating with a commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks. Bush said negotiations are underway to allow the commission to "take a look" at classified security documents. Some members have accused the White House of stonewalling and threatened to subpoena the documents.



AFP/Getty Images

Bush speaks on abortion

Says not all Americans are ready for full ban, 8A

Toll in Iraq costs president at home

115 soldiers have died in combat since May 1, more than during war

By Susan Page and Dennis Cauchon  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The costs of occupation in Iraq are mounting in lives and dollars, and that is eroding support for the war and confidence in President Bush at home.

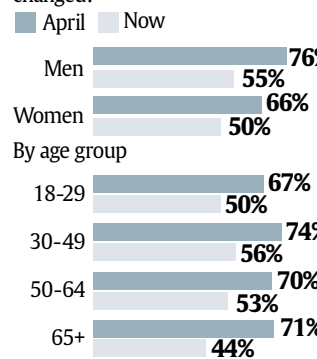
The Pentagon announced Tuesday that the 115 American troops killed in combat in Iraq since May 1 — the day Bush declared major combat operations over — exceeds the 114 killed by hostile fire during the war itself.

Since the heady day six months ago when the statue of Saddam Hussein toppled in the heart of Baghdad, more than one-fourth of Americans who thought the war was worth it have changed their minds. The 71% level of support in USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Polls last spring has fallen to 52% in surveys this fall.

With the onset of more violent and coordinated attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq, this week has become a pivotal point in the conflict and a perilous moment for Bush. In some ways, he has

USA TODAY CNN Gallup Poll

In April, 71% of Americans said the war in Iraq was worth it. Now that proportion has fallen to 52%. How the views of various groups have changed:



Source: Three USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Polls taken in April compared with three taken in September and October. Margins of error: 3 to 5 percentage points.

By Adrienne Lewis, USA TODAY

Please see COVER STORY page 5A ►

Huge solar storm could disrupt communications

Blast expected at noon today

By Dan Vergano  
USA TODAY

A spectacular solar blast headed for Earth, the third-largest recorded, threatens satellites and communications worldwide, astronomers say.

Expected about noon ET today, the blast poses no direct threat to people, as Earth's magnetic field shields the planet's surface from most solar activity. As a precaution, NASA instructed space station astronauts to periodically seek shelter from the storm's effects in

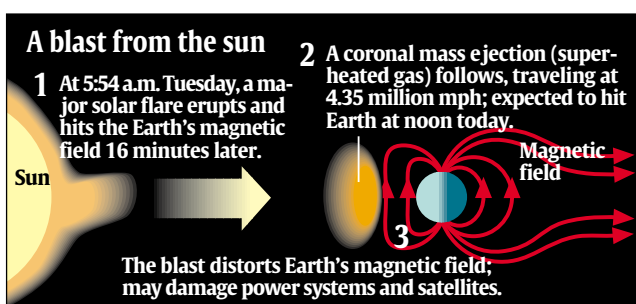
the station's Russian module.

Tuesday morning, radiation from an "X-Class" (extreme) solar flare reached sun-watching satellites and briefly cut into airline radio signals.

Erupting behind the flare was a "coronal mass ejection," a ball of super-heated, electrified gas, traveling about 4.35 million mph.

"It's a major storm, a very dense cloud traveling very fast," says European Space Agency scientist Paal Brekke of the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory, a joint NASA-ESA mission. An aurora, or "northern lights," may be visible in northern states' skies tonight.

The storm is significantly stronger than the solar blast



Source: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center; not to scale

By Sam Ward, USA TODAY

that knocked out Canadian power grids in 1989. Another storm wrecked the Galaxy 4 communications satellite in 1998, disrupting pagers and cellphones. Similar problems may happen today if the storm proves severe.

Today's blast follows recent smaller storms traced to three active sunspot regions. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration warns more solar storms may be coming.

The coronal mass ejection's effects depend on its magnetic

alignment. If it lines up with Earth's North Pole, it should have little effect. Otherwise, effects could be severe. Scientists can't determine the alignment until late this morning.

"The effects mean a lot to power systems," says NOAA space weather forecaster Larry Combs. "We could see widespread voltage-control problems" for utilities.

"Space is, we all know, an inherently hostile environment, but we're confident we can ride this one out," says DirecTV spokesman Robert Mercer. Newer satellites have much better shielding and electronics, he says. His company depends on seven satellites to beam TV signals to homes.